

Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council

*Councilor David A. Murphy, Chair
Councilor Maureen T. Carney
Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge
Councilor James Nash*

**City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street
Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building
Northampton, MA**

Meeting Date: November 17, 2016

Meeting Minutes

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** Councilor Murphy called the meeting order at 8:15 p.m.
2. **Roll Call:** On a roll call the following councilors were present: Councilors Murphy, LaBarge, Nash and Carney. Also present from the City Council were Councilors Dwight, Klein, Bidwell, O'Donnell and Sciarra.
3. **Approve Minutes Of October 20, 2016**

Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the minutes of November 3, 2016; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstention (Councilor Nash).

4. **Approve Committee's Calendar For 2017**

Councilor Murphy reviewed the meeting schedule for 2017. Generally the meetings held on Thursdays correspond to dates of City Council meetings. For financial matters that need to be discussed outside of the City Council meetings the Committee may meet on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

Councilor LaBarge motioned to eliminate December 26, 2017 from the Committee's schedule; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the amended calendar dates; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

The 2017 meeting dates are as follows:

Thursday, January 5, 2017 during City Council meeting
Thursday, January 19, 2017 during City Council meeting
Tuesday, January 24, 2017 @ 5:00 pm
Thursday, February 2, 2017 during City Council meeting
Thursday, February 16, 2017 during City Council meeting
Tuesday, February 28, 2017 @ 5:00 pm
Thursday, March 2, 2017 during City Council meeting
Thursday, March 16, 2017 during City Council meeting
Tuesday, March 28, 2017 @ 5:00 pm
Thursday, April 6, 2017 during City Council meeting
Thursday, April 20, 2017 during City Council meeting
Tuesday, April 25, 2017 @ 5:00 pm
Thursday, May 4, 2017 during City Council meeting
Thursday, May 18, 2017 during City Council meeting
Tuesday, May 23, 2017 @ 5:00 pm
Thursday, June 1, 2017 during City Council meeting
Thursday, June 15, 2017 during City Council meeting
Tuesday, June 27, 2017 @ 5:00 pm
Thursday, July 13, 2017 during City Council meeting
Tuesday, July 25, 2017 @ 5pm
Thursday, August 17, 2017 during City Council meeting
Tuesday, August 22, 2017 @ 5 pm
Thursday, September 7, 2017 during City Council meeting
Thursday, September 21, 2017 during City Council meeting
Tuesday, September 26, 2017 @ 5 pm
Thursday, October 5, 2017 during City Council meeting
Thursday, October 19, 2017 during City Council meeting
Tuesday, October 24, 2017 @ 5 pm
Thursday, November 2, 2017 during City Council meeting
Thursday, November 16, 2017 during City Council meeting
Tuesday, November 28, 2017 @ 5 pm
Thursday, December 7, 2017 during City Council meeting
Thursday, December 21, 2017 during City Council meeting

5. Financial Orders

16.196 An Order To Purchase 20.7 +/- Acres On Water Street In Leeds

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 yes, 0 No.

Planning and Sustainability Director Wayne Feiden explained that this is property in Leeds; the City has owned sections of Mineral Hills Conservation land for 30 years; Council recently approved the purchase of land on Reservoir Road about 6 months ago; this proposed purchase is the last piece of land that the City

is trying to fill in. The homes on Water Street are privately owned; this section of land is behind the back yards of the privately owned property. There is a new small project on Reservoir Road close to Musante Beach where this tract of land would abut. The tract is surrounded by conservation land on the other two sides.

Councilor LaBarge inquired about what land the current owner would not be selling to the City. Director Feiden stated that the owners own a house on Water Street; they intend to keep about 0.5 acres around the house. In addition, they will be selling 6 acres to a land owner to the north of the land proposed by this order.

Councilor Sciarra commented that this order does not state "below assessed value". She compared this order to two other orders before the Committee tonight where this was stated. Director Feiden explained that this selling price does necessarily reflect assessed valuations. The proposed parcel includes a building lot on Water Street. If you value the building lot and the land the City will be paying well below market price.

Councilor Murphy asked whether Director Feiden could provide details on the map showing where the seven acres not included in the purchase is located. Director Feiden indicated that a sketch could be provided; however, the City is in the process of hiring a surveyor so an exact map would not be possible at this time.

16.197 An Order To Purchase 55 +/- Acres On The Easterly Side Of Coles Meadow Road With Easement

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

Director Feiden explained that this property is part of the Broad Brook watershed across from Coles Meadow Road. It is away from a majority of the land that the City already owns. The property has frontage on Linseed Road in Hatfield; however the City does not want to own land in Hatfield. Therefore, from Linseed Road to the Northampton town line the City would be acquiring an easement for the public to pass on this land. The land in Northampton would be acquired to extend protection in the watershed area.

16.198 An Order To Purchase 30.7 Acres In The Mineral Hills Conservation Area

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

Director Feiden explained that a lot of land has been purchased along Turkey Hill Road for conservation purposes with City Council support. The Council has also approved buying additional land south of Route 66. All of the land purchased is considered part of the Mineral Hills Conservation area even though the land owned by the City is not continuous. There is a clear plan to purchase more land to make it

continuous in the future. The land proposed by this order is a key connector between land to the north and south of this area. The Nature Conservancy supports having a continuous piece of land to allow migration of wildlife.

Councilor LaBarge asked if the owners of the property approached the City or if the City approached the landowner. Director Feiden stated that the City approached the property owner. Councilor LaBarge wondered if homes could be built on the property; Director Feiden explained that one home could be built on this property. The current property owners bought a piece of land to protect their view. The City is buying the building lot plus the backland. This backland has very little value. Director Feiden explained that the City will not be building on the property and the current owners will retain a scenic easement. This will give them the right to cut trees.

Councilor Dwight asked if the owner obtained a DCR grant to thin trees on the property who would own the felled trees. Director Feiden explained that the owner only obtained a scenic easement. The City will retain the right to do forest management.

Councilor Bidwell asked about the numbered x's on the map; Director Feiden stated that the x's correspond to GPS coordinates. Councilor Bidwell asked whether Director Feiden could provide an overall map showing where the City owned land in the Mineral Hills area. Councilor Murphy also asked that the map identify where the land is located.

Councilor Murphy asked if this was the last piece of land that the City would be purchasing in this calendar year. Director Feiden explained that in order for these deals to move forward, the City Council needs to provide approval. None of the purchases would close this calendar year. Councilor Murphy asked if it were possible to provide a total of how much land the City bought that resulted in taking it out of the City's tax rolls. Director Feiden noted that this particular property is chapter 61 B so from a property standpoint there is not a lot of tax being paid.

Councilor LaBarge wondered if a survey had been done on the properties that the Committee reviewed tonight. Director Feiden explained that a survey has not yet been done on any of the properties; however, a survey is always done before the property is purchased. The survey is usually done after City Council has taken a vote to authorize the purchase. For the land that is the subject of this order, the perimeter of the land has already been completed. All that is required is a survey between what the property owner is keeping and what the City is purchasing.

16.199 An Order To Approve Budgetary Transfers In The Health Department

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

Finance Director Susan Wright explained that Health Director Merridith O'Leary would like to pay for a temporary person to come in and scan Title 1 documents for record keeping.

16.200 An Order To Approve Payment Of A Prior Year Bill For The DPW

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

Finance Director Susan Wright explained that bill was for a routine soil test. There are plans to work with the DPW to tighten up year-end bill paying process.

16.201 An Order To Appropriate \$7,500 To Pay For Services Related To Roofing Replacement Schematic Design Feasibility Study For Bridge Street Elementary School

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

This order and the one that follows are for the Phase 2 of the roof replacement projects at Bridge Street and Leeds Elementary Schools. This is the third time that a Phase 2 order has come before the City Council. This is because the MSBA program is being used. Under this program each step in the process has certain thresholds that the City must meet. All of the monies thus far in Phase 2 are coming from leftover monies from Phase 1.

Councilor Nash asked whether both Phase 2 projects would be coming out of the same account; Director Wright indicated that they were.

16.202 An Order To Appropriate \$7,500 To Pay For Services Related To Roofing Replacement Schematic Design Feasibility Study For Leeds Elementary School

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

16.203 An Order To Surplus Property Located At 221 Riverside Drive (Feiker School)

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

Mayor Narkewicz explained that the order was written to give the history of the building; recently there was an issue about renewing a lease for the Nonotuck daycare. After signing of the lease took place the City was approached to see if the City would sell the building. The School Committee was comfortable with selling the building; this order would allow the Mayor to put together an RFP and put the building up for sale for fair market value. There will be a restriction that it be kept for early childhood education use for a minimum of 25 years. The new owner would also need to honor the existing lease. As is customary for City property, the RFP will also include a P.I.L.O.T. provision as well.

Councilor Dwight reflected that once the Feiker School closed, the School Committee had decided that an appropriate use would be for an early childhood education program that coincided with an early education program in the City as well.

Councilor Nash wondered how binding the words, “use for early child hood education” would be. Mayor Narkewicz indicated that this will be part of the RFP and it will be fairly binding. The City does have a limit that the provisions could not be binding for more than 30 years. Councilor Bidwell wondered if the language were restrictive enough; Mayor Narkewicz noted that there will also be a provision that the Community Room be made available for use by members of the community. Councilor Bidwell asked what the disposition of the funds is once the property sells; Mayor Narkewicz indicated that the funds would be placed in a sale of land account. In the past the money would be utilized for a capital project most likely for the school department. The City cannot use it for operating expenses.

Councilor Klein wondered about the P.I.L.O.T. program. The Mayor indicated that adding this language is a practice that the City has had when preparing other RFPs to sell property, the objective is to get it on the tax rolls or to seek a P.I.L.O.T. agreement. There has been precedent in doing this.

16.204 An Order To Approve Inter-Municipal Agreements For Paramedic Intercept Services & PVTA Services

Councilor LaBarge moved to return the order back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

Mayor Narkewicz explained that under MGL any time two municipalities enter into agreement with each other a vote needs to be taken first by the City Council. This order will update existing agreements with smaller communities. The City is also entering into a pilot program with PVTA through the Senior Services department. The City is one of four communities that were selected to pilot a senior transportation program. The Senior Center has already been working on this to increase its transportation capabilities. PVTA will be providing technical assistance, vehicles, and training. The Senior Center staff is in the process of getting trained on the dispatcher and driving requirements. There is already a small transportation program at the Senior Center which provides rides to medical appointments and shopping. This would allow the Center to expand this program.

Councilor Klein asked about how the agreement will work for mutual aid. Mayor Narkewicz indicated that this agreement is different than mutual aid because this is for a very specialized service that requires a level of certification that some of the towns don't have. The agreement will help communities provide a level of care that they may not have 24 hours/7 days a week. This is a recognized practice that has been going on for many years. The City will be contracting with different communities to provide a service, and not mutual aid.

Councilor Dwight explained that ambulance charges are generally billed out while other emergency services, such as Fire Rescue or Police services are not billed.

6. New Business – None

- 7. Adjourn:** At 9:06 p.m. Councilor LaBarge moved to adjourn the meeting; Councilor Carney seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

Prepared by:

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